



Memorandum

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: Stephen M. Haase
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**SUBJECT: MARKET-ALMADEN
STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

DATE: March 4, 2003

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3
SNI AREA: Market-Almaden

RECOMMENDATION

Strong Neighborhoods Initiative staff advises the Planning Commission to recommend that the City Council: (1) approve the *Market-Almaden Strong Neighborhoods Improvement Plan*, including the design guidelines in the Neighborhood Design Concepts chapter, as the City/community vision for the future of the Market-Almaden Neighborhood, (2) authorize the Administration to direct the City Departments and Agencies with implementation responsibilities to begin their respective activities, including the general oversight of the implementation of the *Plan* by the Redevelopment Agency, and (3) encourage the Market-Almaden property owners, residents and community members to dedicate their time, energy and resources to implement the recommendations of the *Plan* and continue their community building activities.

BACKGROUND

Market-Almaden Planning Area. The Market-Almaden area is bounded by the San Jose McEnery Convention Center on the north, Market Street on the east, Highway 280 on the south, and Almaden Blvd. on the west.

State University's Urban Planning Program. Staff and the consultant worked with community members and a 16-member Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) comprised of residents, property owners, and local business owners. The NAC met nine times, and hosted three community-wide workshops and one youth workshop. In addition, the NAC formed a Design Subcommittee which met twice to establish design recommendations that were included in the final draft of the *Plan*. All meetings were well attended by a dedicated group of active residents, property owners, neighborhood association members and local merchants.

During the final community workshop held on February 10, 2003, the consultant presented the final draft version of the *Plan* to the public and the NAC. The NAC considered community and NAC feedback, and voted to approve the *Neighborhood Improvement Plan* with minor changes.

ANALYSIS

Purposes of the Plan. The purposes of the *Market-Almaden Neighborhood Improvement Plan* are to document the community's vision for its neighborhood; identify the community's specific goals and objectives for improving the area; and provide the City, Redevelopment Agency and various community stakeholders with a clear guide for neighborhood improvements.

Vision. Stakeholders in the Market-Almaden SNI area crafted a vision for the future of their neighborhood where:

- ? The unique character of the residential neighborhood core is strengthened and protected.
- ? The edges of the neighborhood are defined and appropriate transitions between future new development and the existing residential core are provided.
- ? Outdoor recreation and open space for residents of all ages is provided within the boundaries of the neighborhood.
- ? The walking environment is enhanced, and pedestrian and bicycle access to nearby downtown destinations is strengthened.

Draft Plan.

A. The "Top Ten" Priority Actions. The "Top Ten" Priority Actions represent the short list of

4. Explore the establishment of the Market-Almaden neighborhood core as a Conservation Area.
5. Ensure that project design for the edge of the Convention Center expansion along Balbach Street follows the design recommendations set forth in this *Neighborhood Improvement Plan*, addressing neighborhood concerns.
6. Design and install pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements on Balbach Street and Almaden Boulevard, and establish Balbach Street as a pedestrian corridor.
7. Install pedestrian safety improvements on Market Street at the Balbach Street, William Street and Pierce Avenue intersections.
8. Initiate a neighborhood-wide traffic calming study in 12 to 18 months, once new traffic patterns resulting from current traffic mitigation measures have been established.
9. Improve the pedestrian environment along Market Street with enhanced landscaping and storefronts.
10. Ensure that undergrounding utilities throughout the neighborhood remains a priority for the City.

B. Other Improvement Actions. The complete *Neighborhood Improvement Plan* is organized around five planning sub-areas and three neighborhood systems. These planning sub-areas which divide the Market-Almaden area into geographical subsections and neighborhood systems which examine the interconnected components of the neighborhood, were established to best address the very different aspects of this SNI area. The Action Plan is presented as a matrix, which includes the above "Top Ten" Priority Actions plus additional items totaling 27 Action Items. The following are some highlights from the scope of the full Action Plan:

Planning Sub-Areas

Residential Core (primarily the low-density residential blocks, comprising the entire SNI area, except for the parcels on the Almaden block and those fronting Market Street):

Residents seek to protect and strengthen the unique character of the residential neighborhood core. Two priorities for the community are (1) exploring the establishment of a Conservation Area and (2) rehabilitating a vacant house which was identified as a historic resource in the *Historic Resources Survey for Downtown San Jose* (2000).

Convention Center Expansion: The community has clearly expressed its desire to ensure that the southern edge of any Convention Center expansion respects and is sensitive to

Almaden Boulevard: Almaden Boulevard is currently occupied by a mix of low intensity residential and commercial uses within the *Plan* boundaries and the high rise “Sobrato” building and Convention Center located just north of the boundary. Any potential new development on the Almaden Boulevard block creates an opportunity to determine the character of the western edge of the neighborhood. The *Plan* includes development guidelines for this area that were drafted by a design subcommittee, working with the consultant and comprised of property owners, business owners and residents. Ensuring that any future development respects the intent of the design guidelines is one of the top three priorities.

Market Street: Like the Almaden Boulevard, new development on Market Street has the potential to shape the character of one of the Market-Almaden edges. Design recommendations were also established by the design subcommittee for Market Street.

Neighborhood Systems

Open Space: The community’s Top Priority is the development of a neighborhood park on the Caltrans easement along Reed Street. The neighborhood children played a pivotal role in establishing the park as a Top Priority. As part of the planning process, a guided neighborhood tour and a planning workshop was held for the youth in the community. In their report to the NAC, they highlighted the deficiency of open space in Market-Almaden. In addition, the residents have identified action items to enhance landscaped areas within the neighborhoods and support the reconfiguration of Parque de los Pobladores to better serve the downtown community.

Pedestrian and Bike Connections: In order to promote and facilitate access between the neighborhood, downtown and the Guadalupe River Park, the community identified the creation of Balbach Street as a pedestrian corridor and the installation of pedestrian improvements along Market Street as Top Priorities.

Streetscapes: The undergrounding of overhead utilities is a Top Priority for the residents of Market-Almaden, and the work has already been funded and scheduled for 2004, however, it is important to ensure that undergrounding utilities also remains a priority for the City. In addition to this Top Priority, this neighborhood system section includes action items that address the maintenance of streets, sidewalks, street trees and historic-

comprised of property owners, business owners, the consultant and residents, who worked in close collaboration with the Redevelopment Agency, Planning, Building and Code Enforcement - Planning Services Division, Convention, Arts and Entertainment as well as staff from Council District 3.

The design guidelines primarily address heights (allowing more substantial heights on the Almaden Blvd. and Market Street frontages, stepping down to lower, compatible heights adjacent to residential properties), and other standards for assuring compatible interfaces with the existing residential core. Other compatibility techniques include setbacks, building configurations, shade and shadow limitations, landscaping, etc.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The *Plan* was developed in close coordination with residents, property and business owners and other stakeholders of Market-Almaden at nine monthly NAC meetings and three community workshops. All property owners, residents, business owners and other stakeholders within Market-Almaden were invited to the community workshops through postcard mailers, door to door outreach and PRNS, Council Offices and PBCE contacts. Community members actively participated in each phase of the planning process.

COORDINATION

The preparation of the *Plan* was coordinated with Council Office for District 3, the City Manager's Office, and various Departments and Agencies, including the Departments of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement; Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services, Transportation, Convention, Arts and Entertainment, as well as the Redevelopment Agency. The preparation of this report was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

CEQA

An addendum was prepared to the San Jose 2020 General Plan Environmental Impact Report which was previously certified on August 16, 1994 by the City Council (Resolution Number 65459).